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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3613
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1431
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1298
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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2018

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: IRANIAN AMBASSADOR ALLEGES U.S.
COLLUSION WITH RUSSIA ON NATURAL GAS

Classified By: CDA RICHARD E. HOAGLAND: 1.4 (B), (D)

11. (C) During an April 10 reception hosted by the Baku-based Ambassador of Switzerland, Alain Guidetti, who had just presented his credentials to the Government of Turkmenistan, Charge found himself in a group conversation with the Ambassadors of Georgia, the United Kingdom, Tajikistan, and Iran. The UK ambassador asked the Iranian ambassador if there were any truth in the current press reports that Turkmenistan might soon resume its natural gas deliveries to Iran. Ambassador Mohammad Reza Forghani, whom the Charge generally knows from when they both previously served in Dushanbe, said, "It's near, but it probably all depends on the United States." He elaborated that the price of the natural gas that Iran will pay to Turkmenistan is agreed, but the volume is still being negotiated, because Iran insists on 14 bcm/y (instead of the previous 8 bcm/y) and, he alleged, the United States opposes this.

12. (C) Charge noted for the group that in every meeting with senior Government of Turkmenistan officials during his current tenure in Ashgabat the issue of the Turkmenistan-Iran gas dispute has never been discussed in any substantive way. The Iranian ambassador countered, "But you told them to raise the price of their gas across the board to harm us." Charge answered, "We have always told the Turkmen that it is in their national interest for their independence, sovereignty, and prosperity to seek the best possible price for their hydrocarbon resources, especially to ensure that Russia's monopolist Gazprom not continue to take advantage of them as a colonial outpost supplier of raw resources."

13. (C) Ambassador Forghani persisted, "But you colluded with Russia against our interests." He added, "The best solution for Europe is to get Turkmen gas via Iran to Turkey." Charge conceded, "In the best of all possible worlds that might

theoretically make geographic and economic sense. But, unfortunately, Iran has not yet complied with UN Security Council resolutions, and we cannot consider that option."

14. (C) The Iranian ambassador said, "When Turkmenistan guarantees us 14 bcm/y, we'll have a deal -- but everyone knows they don't currently have enough gas available to make that promise." The Georgian ambassador asked, "So what is your option?" The Iranian ambassador said, enigmatically, "We'll soon have an agreement."
HOAGLAND